

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health and Local Government commented that a technical survey of the scheme could reveal other applications of the techniques envisaged by Professor Wells.

The Cabinet agreed that, as a first stage, the Economic Section should undertake a study of the economic aspects in conjunction with Departments and in consultation with Professor Wells.

2. THE LOCKWOOD REPORT

Introducing his Memorandum dated 11th December, 1964, the Minister of Education made the following principal points by way of explanation and amplification. The Lockwood Committee was a distinguished body, consisting of four educationists of the very highest standing from Great Britain and four local members, two at least of whom had substantial influence in the community. It would be no light matter to set aside such a Committee's recommendations, which to a large extent paralleled those made by the Robbins Committee in Great Britain. Indeed, it could be said that the Lockwood recommendations aimed, generally speaking, at parity in higher education. The fundamental statistics of the Lockwood Report had been reached by the same principles as those adopted for the Robbins Report. The central part of the Lockwood Report was concerned with the timing, nature and location of a second University. The date of October 1968 set for the admission of the first students took into account the time which must elapse to find a suitable Academic Planning Board and Vice-Chancellor and to proceed with the necessary physical developments. As to location, the Committee had sought an area of reasonable tranquillity, with a sufficient surrounding population, with local authorities willing to help (e.g. by making a gift of a site) and with existing accommodation available for students and others. Using these criteria, they had selected Coleraine. This raised the peculiarly difficult problem of Magee University College. In considering the future of this institution, certain facts should be borne in mind. At present those students seeking degrees had ultimately to attend Trinity College, Dublin, for a period. There were 322 full-time students, but of these only 188 came from Northern Ireland and the balance from Great Britain, the Irish Republic or further afield. As more university places were provided in Great Britain, it was to be expected that the demand from that source for places at Magee would decline substantially. There were in addition some 130/140 part-time students. Quite apart from the question of the Lockwood recommendations, the future of Magee was in considerable doubt, since Trinity College, Dublin, was becoming progressively less willing to permit the continued use of Magee as a "back-door" to its degrees. It might be argued that Magee should become a part of a second university, but it would not be easy to attract an Academic Planning Board or a Vice-Chancellor of appropriate standing, while at the same time asking them to fly in the face of the Lockwood Committee's clear opinion that Magee was not an institution of university status. On the other

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hand, it would be a most difficult decision to "kill" Magee, and the proposal that it should be used for teacher-training was an attempt to find a solution. Returning to the question of a second university, the Minister explained that it was envisaged that the main emphasis would be upon the biological and social sciences, and upon a new concept of teacher-training at the university level. Lockwood had also suggested the integration of existing teacher-training colleges as "Colleges of Education"; but clearly there would have to be negotiations with the Churches on this subject. The proposal for an "Ulster College" was in line with the thinking of the Robbins Report, and he did not foresee great difficulties in persuading the Belfast Education Authority to accept a change which would involve a considerable saving to the rates. Finally, it might be thought by some that the simplest course would be to opt for a much bigger Queen's University. Current Whitehall thinking appeared to be switching to an expansion of existing universities rather than the foundation of further new universities; but a Queen's University of 12/13,000 students would be large by any standards. If Q.U.B. were now to be encouraged to expand, it would almost certainly not be practicable to alter course in the Seventies. It was true that a decision against a second university might avoid a direct rebuff to Londonderry, but if Magee were to become a constituent college of Queen's, the latter might at some stage decide to "squeeze" it just as Trinity was now doing. These were the difficult decisions which faced the Cabinet, and also the tactical question as to whether a White Paper should be issued simultaneously with the Lockwood Report, or whether the Report should be published alone with the hazard that the strong and possibly conflicting pressures which would then build up would make it more difficult to reach decisions.

The Minister of Commerce complimented the Minister of Education on the lead which his Memorandum had given to the Cabinet. He himself was in favour of taking decisions which could be announced simultaneously with the publication of the Lockwood Report. Like the Minister of Education, he felt the Government should accept the case made for Coleraine, although this was not the location he had originally favoured. It would have to be appreciated, however, that in deciding not to site a university in the New City, the Government would be making it more difficult to create an effective counter-attraction to Belfast. Coleraine was not intended for build-up as a major industrial centre, and the fact that science and technology would in future be stressed at Queen's would, if anything, make Belfast more of a magnet for new industry. Nevertheless, he felt the views of the eminent educationists on the Lockwood Committee as to location could not be set aside. The Minister of Education commented that the New City had, of course, been considered. There was, however, no reserve of accommodation in the area, and the site of extensive new urban development had not been considered likely to afford the necessary quiet atmosphere. The Minister of Finance added that it would, in his view, not be feasible to concentrate science and technology outside

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Belfast, because of the very heavy expenditure which had already been incurred to provide facilities for these disciplines in the city.

The Minister of Commerce commended the proposal for an "Ulster College" and stressed the vital importance of maintaining parity with Great Britain in higher technical education below the university level. As for the problem of Magee, he did not consider that the proposal for temporary teacher-training in its premises would be sufficient to avert a storm of protest. The wording of paragraph 5 of the suggested Government Statement would cause alarm in Londonderry and further afield, and could lead to the build-up of a very powerful "lobby". He hoped, therefore, that it would be possible to adopt Magee as a constituent part of the new university. The Chief Whip strongly supported these views, and asked why Magee could not be allowed to "die from natural causes". In reply to this point, the Minister of Finance said that Magee could not continue without Government financial support. Although the Lockwood proposals could not be formally considered by the Treasury until the Cabinet had formed its conclusions, it was quite clear that the Treasury would not accept a second university plus continued support for Magee. It would be a difficult decision to take, to forego a second university rather than to cut off assistance to Magee. The Prime Minister commented that this Treasury attitude made the situation even more difficult than he had anticipated. He himself had served as a member of a committee of enquiry into Magee's affairs in 1949 and was, as a result, acutely aware of the strength of the "lobby" which could be assembled in its support.

In reply to a question from the Minister of Commerce as to how those attending Magee part-time would be served if the University College were to close, the Minister of Education said that he saw no difficulty in taking care of these students at other institutions in Londonderry, within the terms of the Morris Report on Adult Education.

The Minister of Home Affairs said that, while he would accept the general arguments advanced by the Lockwood Committee and the Minister of Education, he agreed that the problem of Magee must be approached very warily. A White Paper or Government Statement would not deal with all the points raised by the Committee, and he wondered whether it was necessary to make any statement about Magee at that stage. If the objection to Magee was its low academic standards, could not the premises at any rate be used for some purpose of the new university?

The Minister of Education referred to the suggestions that Magee might become a constituent part either of Queen's or of a new university. The difficulty was that the Lockwood Committee had considered arrangements along these lines and rejected them. Moreover, without any action by the Government, the Committee's implied criticisms of Magee would further reduce its standing. It would not, in his view, be justifiable to risk wrecking the concept of a second university in order to keep alive a relatively

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derelict institution. He acknowledged that his own proposal to use Magee for teacher-training was an attempt to mollify the Magee "lobby"; it might not be acceptable, but he had been unable to find any alternative which would not create adverse reactions in other directions.

The Minister of Agriculture referred to the Lockwood proposals for the transfer of the Faculty of Agriculture to Coleraine. He understood that the Minister of Education would be submitting a further Memorandum on this subject. His colleagues should be aware that he held strong views on these proposals. The Faculty of Agriculture was comparatively small, and the existing arrangements, whereby the heads of his Ministry's Research Divisions also acted as University teachers, worked well and had been much admired. Moreover, the buildings of the Research Divisions, many of them new, were all in the Greater Belfast Area, close both to Queen's and to his Ministry's administrative headquarters. He considered it would be disastrous to interfere with these arrangements.

The Minister of Finance commented that, if the Faculty of Agriculture were to remain in situ and Magee were to continue, by his estimate there would only be a surplus of 650 over places available at Queen's by 1972/73. If this was accurate, it would very much weaken the case with the Treasury for a second university. The Minister of Education observed, however, that there was evidently a discrepancy between Finance and Education statistics. The Ministry of Finance, for example, appeared to be using a figure of 1,200 instead of the figure of 2/3,000 used in paragraph 5 of his Memorandum. The Minister of Finance agreed that there was a discrepancy which should be reconciled before the next Cabinet meeting.

The Minister of Labour and National Insurance said that a second university would be a major financial commitment, taken in conjunction with other capital programmes envisaged (e.g. the New City). The Minister of Education replied that the development of institutions of higher education up to 1980 would call for an expenditure of some £50 million, but this would only keep Northern Ireland in parity with Great Britain.

Returning to the question of location, the Parliamentary Secretary commented that his Department was, of course, disappointed that the New City had not found favour with the Lockwood Committee. He did not feel, however, that the Committee's reasoning could easily be refuted, although transfer of the Faculty of Agriculture to Lurgan/Portadown might be less objectionable than transfer to Coleraine.

The Prime Minister commented that at one time he personally had hoped that the Committee might recommend the establishment in Northern Ireland of an institution more closely resembling the Massachusetts Institute of Technology than any conventional British university. He accepted, however, the point made by the Minister of Finance that recent capital expenditure had particularly fitted Queen's to take a leading role in science and technology.

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In these circumstances, he wondered whether there was not much to be said for an expanded Queen's, rather than any second university. The trend in Britain seemed to be towards larger universities, and it could be that the Lockwood Committee would have taken a different view of the question if they had been more impressed by the present administration of the university. Continuing road developments would make Belfast progressively easier of access to all parts of Northern Ireland, and it would be a long time before a newly-established university could challenge Queen's as a "status-symbol" in the eyes of prospective students and their parents.

The Minister of Finance commented that the new Government in London, unlike its predecessor, seemed to be thinking in terms of larger rather than more universities. There would, however, be very great difficulties in expanding Queen's to 12/13,000. Even its foreseen expansion to 7,000 would present physical problems. It could not be assumed that an expansion of Queen's would be less expensive than setting up a second university; the cost of land in the Belfast area was so high that the reverse might prove to be the case. The Minister of Education supported this view. He observed that a University at Coleraine would hope to start with a gift of some 200 acres of land. A similar area near Belfast would have to be purchased, and at a very high cost.

The Ministers of Education and Finance also referred to the urgent problems of teacher-training. With the raising of the school-leaving age impending, it was vitally necessary to grapple with these problems. At present, because of the unsatisfactory nature of appointment procedures in Northern Ireland, an increasing number of newly-qualified teachers were seeking and obtaining posts in Great Britain.

After further discussion, it was agreed that the Memorandum should come up again at the next Cabinet meeting.

3. GOVERNMENT TRAINING CENTRE AND THE A.E.U.

The Minister of Labour and National Insurance recalled that, when he had informed his colleagues of his intention to place some non-A.E.U. members in training at Felden, the Minister of Finance had suggested prior consultation with the Northern Ireland Committee of the I.C.T.U. He had discussed this suggestion with his Department, but it was felt that such a step might complicate the relations between the Northern Ireland Committee and the A.E.U. The matter could, perhaps, be taken up at the Economic Council, but in the meantime he proposed to proceed with the admission to training of some non-A.E.U. members.

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